



WASHINGTON STATE DEPT OF  
**NATURAL  
RESOURCES**

[dnr.wa.gov/shellfish](http://dnr.wa.gov/shellfish)

# SHELLFISH HARVESTING GUIDE

## SHELLFISH CONSERVATION



Shellfish help to clean water and enrich shoreline habitat. Recreational shellfish harvesting is a popular pastime of many residents and Washington is the largest commercial producer of clams, mussels, and oysters in the country. While shellfish are both culturally and economically vital resources, they are sensitive to overharvesting, disturbances, environmental changes, and pollution. For this reason, state agencies work closely together to maintain safe and sustainable resource management.



### GET A VALID LICENSE

from Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) regional offices or local dealers:

[wdfw.wa.gov/licenses](http://wdfw.wa.gov/licenses)  
360-902-2464

## CHECK LOCAL AREA MAPS & RULES BEFORE YOU GO

Tidelands can be privately or publicly owned. You must obtain permission to harvest on private tidelands and a WDFW shellfish license is required. Public tidelands are managed individually to ensure healthy harvesting conditions exist and stock populations are maintained. Harvesting seasons vary by location. Check the DOH health status and WDFW harvest seasons for public beaches before you go:



[doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety](http://doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety) and  
[wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/shellfish-beaches](http://wdfw.wa.gov/places-to-go/shellfish-beaches)

### KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DIGGING

[doh.wa.gov/shellfishID](http://doh.wa.gov/shellfishID) and  
[wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species](http://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/species)

## HARVEST LIMITS



**Geoduck:** First 3 dug per person per day. No minimum size.

**Horse clam:** First 7 dug per person per day. No minimum size.

**All other clams (except razor clams, which have a limit of 15):** Up to 40; no more than 10 lbs. per person per day.

**Minimum size limit for manila, native littleneck, butter and cockle:** 1.5 inches across widest part of shell.

**Oysters:** 18 per person, removed from shell and shells left at same approximate tide height where harvested. Minimum size limit 2.5 inches across widest part of shell.

**Seaweed:** 10 lbs. wet weight of any species per person per day.

**Squid:** 5 qt. or 10 lbs. per person per day.

**Learn more about take limits online:**

[www.eregulations.com/washington/fishing/shellfish-seaweed-species-rules](http://www.eregulations.com/washington/fishing/shellfish-seaweed-species-rules)



**Recreational harvesting for sale or barter is not allowed on public lands.**

## MAINTAIN SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING GROUNDS

**Refill holes created while digging clams.\*** This prevents issues like smothering by sediment piles or increased water temperature in holes.

**10-15 FT.  
APART**

**Dig several small holes 10-15 feet apart to spread impact.** Many species live close to the surface and don't require deep holes.

**Avoid raking and digging in eelgrass and seaweed beds, which provide vital habitat for many species.**



## ENSURE YOUR HARVEST IS SAFE FOR EATING

**Check health status of a beach BEFORE harvesting.** Shellfish are filter feeders and can accumulate bacteria and viruses, toxic chemicals, and naturally occurring algal biotoxins. Contaminated shellfish pose serious health risks. Check the Shellfish Safety Map on the day you plan to harvest.



**Harvest as the tide goes out, chill immediately, and cook thoroughly to reduce risk of illness.** Take extra care in warm months to prevent illness from naturally occurring Vibrio bacteria, which multiply rapidly in warm conditions.

[doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety](http://doh.wa.gov/shellfishsafety)



**Marine Biotoxin Hotline: 1-800-562-5632**  
**Shellfish Program: 360-236-3330**